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In the Claims:

Claims 1 - 23 (canceled)

1 Claim 24 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating
2 one or more selected background sounds with a voice mail message for playback to a listener,
3 wherein the voice mail message comprises a plurality of message segments, and wherein each of
4 the selected background sounds is associated with one or more of the message segments, further
5 comprising the step of transmitting an address of each of the selected background sounds from a
6 telephone or telephone system used by a speaker of the voice mail message, wherein each address
7 may be used to locate a file containing a respective one of the selected background sounds and
8 The method according to Claim 23, wherein the each address is a Uniform Resource Locator.

1 Claim 25 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating
2 one or more selected background sounds with a voice mail message for playback to a listener,
3 wherein:
4 the voice mail message comprises a plurality of message segments;
5 each of the selected background sounds is associated with one or more of the message
6 segments;
7 the one or more selected background sounds are dynamically selected from among a
8 plurality of background sounds that are available to or from a system; and
9 the system is one of (1) a telephone or telephone system from which the voice mail
10 message originates, (2) an apparatus on which the voice mail message is recorded, and (3) a

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11 telephone company system through which the voice mail message passes as the voice mail
12 message is being left for the listener, and The method according to Claim 12, further comprising
13 the step of loading one or more new background sounds onto the system telephone or telephone
14 system, thereby revising the plurality of background sounds that are available.

Claims 26 - 29 (canceled)

1 Claim 30 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating a
2 selected background sound with a voice mail message for playback to a listener. The method
3 according to Claim 1, wherein the incorporating is performed by conferencing the selected
4 background sound into a 3-way call between a speaker of the voice mail message and a receiver
5 thereof.

1 Claim 31 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating a
2 selected background sound with a voice mail message for playback to a listener. The method
3 according to Claim 1, wherein the incorporating is performed during the playback to the listener.

Claims 32 - 37 (canceled)

1 Claim 38 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages for playback to a
2 listener, each of the voice mail messages comprising a plurality of message segments, by
3 inserting a plurality of audio files into a particular voice mail message or inserting a single audio

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4 file into the particular voice mail message multiple times, wherein at least one of the inserted
5 audio files is an audio signature associated with a speaker who records the voice mail message,
6 and The method according to Claim 37; further comprising the step of playing the audio
7 signature rather than the voice mail message to the listener.

Claims 39 - 47 (canceled)

1 Claim 48 (currently amended): A method of improving telephone conversations, comprising
2 incorporating a selected background sound into a telephone conversation between a caller and a
3 called party. The method according to Claim 46; wherein the incorporating is performed by
4 conferencing the selected background sound into a 3-way call between the caller and the called
5 party.

Claims 49 - 63 (canceled)

1 Claim 64 (currently amended): A system for enhancing voice mail messages, comprising:
2 a voice mail message comprising one or more message segments;
3 one or more background sounds that are available on an apparatus;
4 means for incorporating one or more of the background sounds with one or more of the
5 message segments;
6 means for playing the voice mail message to a listener with the incorporated background
7 sounds; and The system according to Claim 52; further comprising

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8 means for loading one or more new background sounds onto the apparatus, thereby
9 revising the plurality of background sounds that are available.

Claim 65 (canceled)

1 Claim 66 (currently amended): ~~The system according to Claim 52, A system for enhancing voice~~
2 ~~mail messages, comprising:~~

3 ~~a voice mail message comprising one or more message segments;~~

4 ~~one or more background sounds;~~

5 ~~means for incorporating one or more of the background sounds with one or more of the~~
6 ~~message segments, wherein the incorporating is performed by conferencing the selected~~
7 ~~background sounds into a 3-way call between a speaker of the voice mail message and a receiver~~
8 ~~thereof; and~~

9 ~~means for playing the voice mail message to a listener with the incorporated background~~
10 ~~sounds.~~

Claims 67 - 69 (canceled)

1 Claim 70 (currently amended): ~~A system for improving telephone conversations, comprising:~~
2 ~~means for establishing a telephone conversation between a caller and a called party; and~~
3 ~~means for incorporating one or more background sounds into the telephone conversation.~~

4 ~~The system according to Claim 69, wherein the means for incorporating further comprises means~~

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5 for conferencing the one or more background sounds into a 3-way call between the caller and the
6 called party.

Claims 71 - 82 (canceled)

1 Claim 83 (currently amended): A computer program product for enhancing voice mail messages,
2 the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media and
3 comprising:
4 computer-readable program code means for selecting one or more background sounds;
5 and
6 computer-readable program code means for incorporating the selected background
7 sounds with a voice mail message for playback to a listener. The computer program product
8 according to Claim 72; wherein the computer-readable program code means for incorporating
9 further comprises computer-readable program code means for conferencing the selected
10 background sounds into a 3-way call between a speaker of the voice mail message and a receiver
11 thereof.

Claims 84 - 87 (canceled)

1 Claim 88 (currently amended): A computer program product for improving telephone
2 conversations, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable
3 media and comprising:

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4 computer-readable program code means for selecting one or more background sounds;

5 and

6 computer-readable program code means for incorporating the selected background sounds

7 into a telephone conversation between a caller and a called party. The computer program product

8 according to Claim 86, wherein the computer-readable program code means for incorporating

9 further comprises computer-readable program code means for conferencing the selected

10 background sound into a 3-way call between the caller and the called party.

1 Claim 89 (new): A computer program product for enhancing voice mail messages for playback
2 to a listener, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media
3 and comprising:

4 computer-readable program code means for incorporating one or more selected
5 background sounds with a voice mail message, wherein the voice mail message comprises a
6 plurality of message segments, and wherein each of the selected background sounds is associated
7 with one or more of the message segments; and

8 computer-readable program code means transmitting an address of each of the selected
9 background sounds from a telephone or telephone system used by a speaker of the voice mail
10 message, wherein each address may be used to locate a file containing a respective one of the
11 selected background sounds and wherein each address is a Uniform Resource Locator.

1 Claim 90 (new): A system for enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating a selected
2 background sound with a voice mail message for playback to a listener, wherein the

3 incorporating is performed during the playback to the listener.

1 Claim 9) (new): A computer program product for enhancing voice mail messages for playback
2 to a listener, each of the voice mail messages comprising a plurality of message segments, the
3 computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media and comprising:
4 computer-readable program code means for inserting a plurality of audio files into a
5 particular voice mail message or inserting a single audio file into the particular voice mail
6 message multiple times, wherein at least one of the inserted audio files is an audio signature
7 associated with a speaker who records the voice mail message; and
8 computer-readable program code means for playing the audio signature, rather than the
9 voice mail message, to the listener.